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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 103379

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#) [WE](#)

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - ISRAEL, THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

¶1. This Travel Warning updates information on the general security environment in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and reminds American citizens of threats to themselves and to U.S. interests in those locations. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to remain mindful of security factors when planning travel to Israel. In addition, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to the West Bank and to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip. This warning supersedes the Travel Warning issued March 19, 2008.

The Gaza Strip

¶2. Conflict and violence can occur and spread rapidly and unpredictably in the Gaza Strip. The State Department strongly recommends that American citizens refrain from all travel to the Gaza strip and that those already in Gaza depart immediately. This recommendation has been in effect since the deadly roadside bombing of a U.S. Embassy convoy in Gaza in October 2003. It applies to all Americans, including journalists and aid workers. No official travel is permitted inside the Gaza Strip at this time.

¶3. Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization, violently assumed control over Gaza in June 2007, making worse the already dangerous security situation there. Although a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect June 19, 2008, the Gaza Strip continues to be a potential center of violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian terrorist groups. Militants there have abducted Western citizens, and terrorist organizations have threatened attacks against U.S. interests. The American International School in northern Gaza has been the target of repeated attacks. Despite the ceasefire,

Hamas and Islamic Jihad (another designated foreign terrorist organization) still occasionally launch rocket attacks against Israeli towns as far north as Ashkelon. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) retains the option of responding to these attacks with military force. In addition, Hamas uses violence against other Palestinian factions in Gaza, and innocent civilians are at times the victims.

14. The security environment is very fluid in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip, and the ceasefire could collapse with little or no advance warning. Rocket and mortar launches into Israel are unpredictable, resulting in a potentially unsafe situation. Gunfire from Gaza into Israel is a danger. Palestinian snipers have killed individuals within rifle range of the Gaza border. As a result, travel in the surrounding area is strongly discouraged. Due to the continued high level of tensions and violence in and near the Gaza Strip, all U.S. Embassy and Consulate General employees are required to provide 24 hours advance notice of any official travel to the city of Sderot, crossing points into Gaza, and to any other areas bordering Gaza. American citizens should be aware that as a consequence of the prohibition on travel by U.S. Government employees to the Gaza Strip, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens there is extremely limited.

The West Bank

15. The security environment in the West Bank remains

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volatile. Violent demonstrations, kidnappings and shootings are unpredictable and can occur without warning. The Department of State urges Americans to defer travel to the West Bank at this time.

16. The IDF continues to carry out security operations in the West Bank, including nighttime raids to arrest terrorist suspects that sometimes result in gun battles. Israeli security operations can occur at any time, including frequent raids to arrest terrorist suspects that result in shootings, demonstrations and often violent conflict. This heightens the risk of Americans being caught in the middle of potentially dangerous situations. Some Americans and Europeans involved in demonstrations and other such activities in the West Bank have become involved in confrontations with Israeli settlers and the IDF. The State Department recommends that Americans, for their own safety, avoid demonstrations.

17. All those who pass through the West Bank should exercise particular care when approaching and transiting Israeli military checkpoints. Travelers should be aware that they might encounter delays and difficulties, and might even be denied passage through a checkpoint.

18. American citizens should be aware that, as a consequence of the current limitations on official travel to the West Bank, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens there is limited.

Travel Restrictions for U.S. Government Personnel

19. All American U.S. Government personnel and their dependents are prohibited from traveling to any cities, towns or settlements in the West Bank, except when they are on mission-essential business or are traveling for

other mission-approved purposes. For limited, personal travel, U.S. government personnel and family members are permitted to travel through the West Bank only by using Routes 1 and 90 to reach the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge or the Dead Sea coast near Ein Gedi and Masada. They are also permitted to travel north on Route 90 from the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge to the Sea of Galilee. Use of these routes is approved for transit only, with stops permitted only at Qumran National Park off Route 90 by the Dead Sea. Each such transit requires prior notification to the Consulate General's security office and must occur during daylight hours. U.S. Government personnel and family members are permitted both official and personal travel on Route 443 between Modi'in and Jerusalem without prior notification, during daylight hours only.

General Safety and Security

¶10. Israeli authorities remain concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist attacks. In September 2008, a vehicle plowed into a group of Israeli soldiers on a traffic island near a Jerusalem square, injuring more than a dozen. Two fatal bulldozer attacks on civilians in July 2008 and a March 2008 shooting, all in Jerusalem, and a February 2008 bombing in Dimona are reminders of the precarious security environment. The threat of such attacks is on-going. American citizens are cautioned that a greater danger may exist in the vicinity of restaurants, businesses and other places associated with U.S. interests and/or located near U.S. official buildings, such as the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. Rocket fire from Lebanon into Israel, except for one recent

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incident, has ceased since the end of military hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah forces in southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Although Israel denied any involvement, the killing of a Hizbollah leader in Syria on February 12, 2008, raises the possibility of Hizbollah attacks against Israel.

¶11. American citizens are urged to exercise a high degree of caution and common sense when patronizing restaurants, nightclubs, cafes, malls, places of worship, and theaters -- especially during peak hours. Large crowds and public gatherings have been targeted by terrorists in the past and should be avoided to the extent practicable. American citizens should take into consideration that public buses, trains, and their respective terminals are "off-limits" to U.S. Government personnel.

¶12. The State Department urges American citizens to remain vigilant while traveling throughout Jerusalem, especially within the commercial and downtown areas of West Jerusalem and the city center. Israeli security services report that they continue to receive information of planned terrorist attacks in and around Jerusalem. Spontaneous or planned protests within the Old City are possible, especially after Friday prayers. Some of these protests have led to violent clashes. The Old City of Jerusalem is off-limits to U.S. Government personnel and their family members after dark during the entire week and between the hours of 11 am and 2 pm on Fridays.

Entry/Exit Difficulties

¶13. The Government of Israel considers American citizens who also hold Israeli citizenship or have a claim to such dual nationality to be Israeli citizens for immigration and other legal purposes. For example, an American citizen child of an Israeli parent will be considered an Israeli citizen by Israeli immigration officials and Israeli law will apply to the child's travel to, and departure from, Israel.

¶14. American citizens whom Israeli authorities determine to be of Arab origin are likely to face additional, often time-consuming, and probing questioning by immigration and border authorities, or may even be denied entry into Israel. If they are determined by Israeli authorities to have a claim to residency status in the West Bank or Gaza, or to have a claim to a Palestinian identification number, such American citizens may be required by the Government of Israel to use a Palestinian Authority travel document to transit Israel to enter the West Bank or Gaza. Such a determination could be made for American citizens if they or their immediate family members were born in the West Bank or Gaza, currently reside there, or lived there for any appreciable amount of time.

¶15. American citizens who hold a Palestinian Authority ID, as well as persons judged by the Israeli authorities to have claim to a Palestinian Authority ID, will be considered subject to Israeli law and to regulations that Israel applies to residents of the West Bank and Gaza, regardless of the fact that they hold U.S. citizenship. A Palestinian ID number might be active or inactive. If active, the Government of Israel may stamp the Palestinian Identification Number in the U.S. passport, and the American citizen may be required to obtain Palestinian Authority travel documents prior to departing Israel. In addition, American citizens having or eligible for a Palestinian Authority ID who entered Israel via Ben

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Gurion Airport might be required to depart via the Allenby Bridge to Jordan. Upon arrival, such persons may wish to consider asking Israeli immigration authorities from where they will be required to depart. Additionally, American citizens who have (or who are eligible to receive) a Palestinian Authority Identification Number, may be refused entry to Israel via Ben Gurion Airport and told that they must enter Israel from Jordan via the Allenby Bridge.

¶16. The United States Government seeks equal treatment for all American citizens regardless of national origin or ethnicity. American citizens who encounter difficulties are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem at the telephone numbers below.

¶17. Americans in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are strongly encouraged to register with the Consular Sections of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. U.S. citizens who require emergency services may telephone the Consulate General in Jerusalem at (972) (2) 628-7137, after hours: (972) (2) 622-7250 or the Embassy in Tel Aviv at (972) (3) 519-7575, after hours: (972) (3) 519-7551.

¶18. Current information on travel and security in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. For additional and more in-depth information about specific aspects of travel to these

areas, U.S. citizens should consult: the Country Specific Information for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza; and the Worldwide Caution. These along with other Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and Country Specific Information sheets are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be accessed at <http://usembassy-israel.org.il> or <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov>.

¶19. Minimize considered.
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